

CD2003--110

Friday, October 3, 2003
8 pm. Walter Hall

University of Toronto
Faculty of Music
Faculty Artist Series
Presents

Scott St. John, violin
Lydia Wong, piano
BEETHOVEN VIOLIN SONATAS III

PROGRAMME

Ludwig van Beethoven
1770-1827

Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 5 in F major,
Op. 24 "Spring"
Allegro
Adagio molto espressivo
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 6 in A major,
Op. 30 No. 1
Allegro
Adagio molto espressivo
Allegretto con variazioni

INTERMISSION

Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 7 in C minor,
Op. 30 No. 2
Allegro con brio
Adagio cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro
Finale: Allegro

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to fund student awards at the Faculty of Music

This recital is performed on the Edith McConica Steinway piano.

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Programme Notes

Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 5, Op. 24 "Spring"

Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 6, Op. 30 No. 1

Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 7, Op. 30 No. 2

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born in Bonn, 1770

Died in Vienna, 1827

The emphasis implied in the phrase "piano and violin," appearing in the three titles above, may seem a strange reversal of priorities. After all, isn't the violin the most "important" instrument in these sonatas? In fact, these titles represent a late eighteenth-century convention that was still observed by publishers in the first years of the nineteenth century, when these works were composed.

In the classical period, sonatas for piano with violin "accompaniment" (sometimes designated "ad libitum") were popular with amateur musicians; and many editions of such works, intended for performance in the home, were brought out by publishing houses. But although the titles of Beethoven's sonatas may conform to classical convention, in their content they are quite different from compositions aimed at mass markets. They are, of course, too difficult for most amateur musicians; moreover, Beethoven – a professional pianist, and also a violinist – combines, contrasts and unifies the two instruments in ways that transcend simplistic hierarchical thinking. Whether they are called sonatas for "piano and violin" or for "violin and piano," neither instrument is subordinate to the other.

Sonata No. 5, Op. 24 "Spring"

Beethoven composed this popular sonata in 1801, at a time when the 31-year-old composer's career was going well. "I can have six or seven publishers or more for every piece, if I choose," he boasted to a friend. "They no longer bargain with me – I demand, and they pay." Yet in the midst of his professional success, he was becoming increasingly aware of the hearing problems

that were beginning to make his life difficult. Confiding in his friend, the theologian Carl Amenda, he wrote, "I often wish that you were with me, for your Beethoven is very unhappy. You must know that one of my most precious faculties, that of hearing, has become very defective. . . . Whether I shall ever be cured remains to be seen."

In the face of this troubling development, Beethoven forged ahead in 1801, working on his Second Symphony, composing his *Piano Sonata Op. 28* and also the "Spring" Sonata (a publisher's nickname, not Beethoven's), written for the composer's aristocratic friend, Count Moritz von Fries. Somewhat unusually, it is in four movements. Some scholars have suggested that the opening "Allegro" movement, with its tender, lilting first theme, was Beethoven's response to criticism that his music was wild and unruly. The second movement is a five-part operatically inspired "aria" without words; and the scherzo that follows is a tiny gem, just over a minute long. (Robert Schumann later paraphrased it in the "Soldier's March" of his *Scenes From Childhood*.) The finale is a tonally adventurous rondo: from the initial key of F major, Beethoven visits A-flat major, and both E-flat major and minor, before returning home.

Sonata No. 6, Op. 30 No. 1

In 1802 Beethoven's hearing deteriorated substantially, and on the advice of doctors he spent several months in the town of Heiligenstadt, outside Vienna, in the hopes that the country air would benefit his health. Unfortunately, this change of environment had no effect on his ears, and it was in this town that the composer came to terms with the likelihood that his condition was irreversible. In response to this personal tragedy, he penned his "Heiligenstadt Testament," addressed to his brothers, but never sent. "My misfortune is doubly painful because it must lead to my being misunderstood," he wrote. "For me there can be no recreation in the society of others, no

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